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TOLD TO THE CHILDREN SERIES
EDITED BY LOUEY CHISHOLM

STORIES FROM GRIMM

TO BABA



Stories from Grimm

TOLD TO THE CHILDREN BY

AMY STEEDMAN

WITH PICTURES BY

HARRY ROWNTREE



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

What can I tell you about this book that you do not know already? I expect you understand more about Fairy Tales than I do, for the fairies love children and do not so readily make friends with grown-up people. But all I want to tell you is that these are the old Fairy Tales which the brothers Grimm told a hundred years ago, and to which children have always loved to listen, only they are now put into a dear dumpy little cover by your Fairy-godmother, Loney Chisholm, and have quite new beautiful pictures.

The only thing I have done is to tell the tales over again with as few long words as possible, so that you can read them easily to yourself and understand all about everything.

The pity is that the dear little cover will not hold all Grimm's Fairy Tales. But if you like these very much, and your Fairy-godmother hears that you want more, who knows but she may give you your wish, just as Fairy-godmothers did in the far-away time of long ago.

AMY STEEDMAN.

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RUMPELSTILTSKIN

There was once upon a time a miller, who had a very beautiful daughter. She was so beautiful and so clever, that her father was never tired of boasting about her loveliness and all the wonderful things she could do.

It happened one day that the miller had to go to the palace to see the King on business, and as he wanted to appear very grand and important, he said to the King, 'Your Majesty has very good straw here in the royal barns, but I have a daughter who can spin straw into gold.'

'Indeed,' said the King, 'she must be very clever. Send her up to the palace at once that I may see what she can do.' For the King was very fond of gold.

The miller began to feel very uncomfortable and to wish that he had not boasted quite so much, but it was too late now, and he was

obliged to do as the King commanded. So he took his daughter up to the palace, and as soon as the King saw her, he led her into a large room filled with straw. There he gave her a stool and a spinning-wheel, and said, 'Now, pretty one, see how quickly you can spin this straw into gold. I will come back to-morrow morning, and if it is not done then, I shall give orders that you are to be put to death.'

The poor maiden sat and wept there in great distress. She had never heard of such a thing as spinning straw into gold, and to save her life she could not think how it was to be done. She wept and she wept till she could scarcely see out of her eyes, and then suddenly she heard a door creak, and a funny little man came hopping into the room.

'What are you crying about?' he asked. 'You will spoil your pretty eyes if you do not stop. Tell me what is the matter, and I will try to help you.'

'O sir,' sobbed the maiden, 'the King has ordered me to spin all this straw into gold before to-morrow morning. If it is not done

I shall lose my life, and I don't even know how to begin.'

'Now what will you give me if I spin it for you ?' asked the little man.

'I will give you my beautiful necklace,' she answered gladly.

Then the dwarf sat down at the spinning-wheel and began to spin. Whir, whir, went the straw through his fingers, and out it came in shining threads, till all the straw was gone and the gold thread lay in a glistening heap.

'Good-bye,' said the little man, taking the necklace and making a low bow.

And before the miller's daughter could say 'Thank you,' he had hopped out of the room.

The next morning the King came very early to see if the straw was really turned into gold. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the shining pile, but it only made him want more. He led the maiden away quickly to another room, bigger than the first and also filled with straw, and told her that she must spin that into gold too.

'And if it is not done by to-morrow morning, you will know what to expect,' he said.

This was really very hard, just when the poor girl had thought her life was saved. She sat down by the spinning-wheel and began to weep more bitterly than ever, for though she had watched the little dwarf spinning the straw, she did not know at all how it was turned into gold.

But the moment she began to weep, the door flew open again and the little man came hopping in just as he had done the day before.

'Come, come,' he said, 'no more tears! What will you give me if I help you again?'

'I will give you my diamond ring,' said the maiden joyfully. And again the dwarf sat down at the spinning-wheel, and again the wheel went whizzing round and round till all the straw was spun into threads of gold.

'Oh, thank you, thank you!' cried the maiden. But the dwarf was gone before she could say another word.

The King's eyes sparkled with pleasure when he came next morning and saw the large pile of gold.

'This is really a wonderfully clever little maiden,' he said to himself.

Then he took her to a still larger room filled with straw, and smiling kindly at her, he said, 'If you can spin all this straw into gold before to-morrow morning, I will marry you and you shall be Queen.' For he felt sure he would never find a richer or more beautiful wife, if he searched the whole world through.

The King had scarcely been gone a moment when in hopped the little dwarf again, and you may be sure the miller's daughter was very glad to see him.

'What will you give me this time, if I do your work for you?' asked the manikin.

Now the maiden had nothing more to give, and did not know what to do. But the dwarf soon thought of a plan.

'You can make me a promise,' he said. 'When you are Queen, and your first little baby is born, you shall give it to me.'

The poor maiden thought there was very little chance of her ever being Queen, so she promised at once, caring only about how she might save her life.

Then the dwarf began his spinning again, and worked so merrily and fast that before

long the last handful of straw was spun into gold, and the golden pile was so high that it almost reached the ceiling.

The next morning the King came as usual, and was so delighted with the gold and the beauty of the maiden, that he began to prepare at once for the wedding. He gave her the most beautiful clothes and shining jewels, and they drove away together in a golden coach to church and were married without delay.

The Queen was now so happy that she forgot all her troubles, and never once thought of the promise which she had made to the little dwarf. And as time went on a beautiful little baby was born and the Queen was happier than ever.

'I shall never know what it is to be sad again,' she said, as she held the baby close in her arms.

But at that very moment a door creaked and, looking up, the Queen saw the same little dwarf come hopping in, just as he had done when he had come to spin the straw into gold.

'What do you want?' asked the Queen, holding her baby more tightly, and looking at the dwarf with frightened eyes.

'I want the baby,' answered the little man. 'Have you forgotten your promise?'

Then the poor Queen remembered how she had said she would give her first little baby to the dwarf, and she burst into tears.

'Oh, take anything else, only leave me my baby!' she cried. And she sobbed so bitterly that the dwarf was quite sorry for her. He wanted the baby badly, but he had a kind little heart, and he thought he would give the Queen one more chance.

'If you can find out what my name is in three days, you shall keep your child,' he said. And then he hopped quickly away.

The Queen could not sleep all night, but lay awake thinking of all the names she had ever heard. And when the little man came in the morning she began guessing the longest and most difficult names she could think of.

But to every name the dwarf answered with a merry grin, 'No, that is not my name.'

The next day the Queen sent messengers over all the country to collect all the curious names they could find, and when the little man appeared she asked, 'Is it Spindleshanks, or Squint-eye, or Bandy-legs?'

'No, it is not!' shouted the little man, hugging himself with joy.

Then the Queen grew terribly anxious, for there was only one day left, and she sent more and more messengers out to search for fresh names.

But the messengers came back to say they could find no new names, and only one had a story to tell. He said he had searched far and near until he came to the wildest part of a dark mountain. There, on the edge of a pine forest, where even the fox and the hare were afraid to go, he had come upon a little man dancing and shouting in front of a tiny red-roofed cottage. There was a fire outside the little house, and the manikin had evidently been baking, for he had a tray of freshly baked loaves on his head, and they bounced up and down as he danced and sang,

'To-day I brew, to-night I bake,
To-morrow I shall the Queen's child take;
For, guess as she may, she never can know
That my name is Rumpelstiltskin, O.'

Then the Queen clapped her hands with joy, for she was sure the little man was no other than the dwarf who was coming to take away her baby.

Very early next morning the dwarf arrived, and very gaily he hopped into the Queen's room. He was sorry for her grief, but then how delicious it was to think of carrying off the baby to live with him in the little red cottage on the edge of the pine wood! He had brought a soft white blanket to roll it in, for he was a kind-hearted little dwarf, and did not want the baby to catch cold.

So he spread out the blanket ready, and then turned to the Queen and said gaily, 'Well, have you guessed my name?'

The Queen was smiling too, but she pretended she was still trying to guess.

'Is it William?' she asked.

'No, it is not!' shouted the little man gleefully.

'Is it George?' she said.

'No, it is not!' cried the little man, hopping round on one leg.

'Is it John?' she asked sadly, as if she had come to the end of her questions.

'No, it is not John!' laughed the little man, preparing to wrap the baby up in the blanket.

'Then it must be Rumpelstiltskin!' cried the Queen.

'The witches must have told you! The witches must have told you! Oh, bother the witches!' screamed the little man, dancing with rage and disappointment. He stamped his foot so hard that it went right through the floor and he could not pull it out again. Then he seized it with both hands, and tugged and pulled until the leg was pulled quite off, and he had to hop away on one leg back to his little cottage, carrying the empty blanket. And the Queen never saw Rumpelstiltskin again.

THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN KIDS

There never was a happier little family than the one that lived in the little cottage behind the hill. The mother, Widow Goat, was hard-working and industrious, and the seven little kids were as good and obedient as little kids should be. The only thing that disturbed their happiness was the thought of the old grey wolf who lived over the hill.

Now the mother goat was obliged to go out every day to sell milk, that she might make money enough to buy clothes and food for the family, and the seven little kids had to be left all alone in the cottage.

But before the mother set out in the morning she called her eldest kid, and said to her, 'Nanny, look after your brothers and sisters, and, whatever happens, do not open the door if the old wolf comes.'

'Oh, I know the old monster well,' answered

the eldest kid, 'and you may be sure I shall not let him in.'

'Don't be too sure of that,' said her mother. 'He is a clever old villain, and can pretend that he is not a wolf at all. But he can never hide his rough voice or his black feet, so look out for them and be careful, for,

'He will eat you, eat you, eat you,
He will gobble, snap, and scrunch,
Not a single hair he'll leave you,
If he catches you for lunch.'

The kids all promised to be very careful, and then they all climbed up to the window in a row and waved to their mother as she went off.

Now as soon as the old grey wolf saw that Widow Goat had left the cottage, he thought how much he would relish a nice fat kid for dinner, so he crept up to the cottage and knocked at the door.

'Let me in, children!' he cried, pretending that he was their mother come back again; 'I have bought you a cake for dinner, with white icing on it.'

The young kids skipped for joy when they

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heard of the cake, and Billy said to his sister, 'Open the door quickly, Nanny, and let mother in!'

But the eldest kid remembered her mother's warning, and she was sure their mother never spoke in such a gruff, rough voice. So she looked through the keyhole, and there she saw the wolf.

'Go away, Mr. Wolf!' she cried; 'I know you by your voice, you growly old gruffin!'

Then the wolf slunk away with his tail between his legs, but all the more determined to have kid for dinner. So he hurried off to the nearest town and went to the chemist's shop to buy lozenges to soften his voice.

The chemist's boy gave him all the sugar-candy and all the jujubes in the shop, but still the wolf growled and said they were doing him no good. Then the boy gave him a large lump of chalk, and told him to run for half a mile and then swallow it. For he wanted to get the wolf out of the shop. So the wolf ran back and ate up the whole lump of chalk, and when he reached the little cottage his voice sounded quite sweet and low.

'Open the door, dear children !' he cried ; 'I have bought you the new frocks I promised.'

And he stood on his hind legs and placed his forepaws on the window sill.

But although his voice was now so soft, the little kids were still frightened, and they ran to the window and peeped over the sill, and there they saw the two black paws.

'Oh, it's the wolf, the wolf !' they cried out. 'Look at his black feet ! Do not open the door.'

Then the old wolf saw that they had found him out again, and he slunk away to think of some other plan.

'Those kids are much too clever,' he said to himself, 'but I think they will taste good.' So he trotted off to the baker's shop and put his paws on the counter.

'I've scalded my paws, Mr. Dough,' he said. 'Will you be so kind as to give me a penny-worth of flour, and to powder them well for me ?'

The baker powdered the black paws till they looked as white as snow, and off the wicked old wolf started for the cottage once more.

'Children !' he cried in his nicely chalked voice

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as he rapped at the door, 'I am your mother ; be quick and let me in.'

'No, no!' they cried, 'let us see your' feet first.'

So the cunning old wolf put his paws on the window sill, and when the little kids saw how white they were, they jumped for joy, for they thought this was really their mother at last. They ran to the door and opened it wide—and in walked THE WOLF!

With screams of terror the kids ran to hide themselves under the bed, in the oven, behind the cupboard, inside the clock-case, and under the wash-tub. But the wicked wolf came leaping after them with gleaming eyes and wide open mouth, showing his long red tongue and sharp pointed teeth. One by one he searched them out and gobbled them up, all except the youngest kid, who was hidden away in the clock-case. Then, feeling tired after his long walks and large lunch, he went out and lay in the sunshine under a tree, and went comfortably to sleep.

And, oh, what a terrific sight met the gaze of Widow Goat when she returned a little later!

The cottage door stood wide open, the furniture was all upside down, the sheets were torn off the bed, and the new wash-tub was broken in pieces. And there was not a kid to be seen anywhere.

'Nanny! Billy!' she cried, looking round for her lost kids and calling each one by its name. At last, when she called her youngest kid, a little voice answered from inside the clock-case, 'I am here, mother. Oh, is the wolf gone?'

Then the mother goat opened the case and lifted out the poor little kid, who told her the whole terrible story.

What a sad little home it was now! Poor Widow Goat could not bear to stay in it, so she put on her shawl again, and tied a warm red comforter round the little kid's neck, and they wandered together out on to the hillside. The sun shone brightly and the birds sang gaily, but there was nothing but sorrow for the poor mother goat and her one little kid as they walked along hand in hand.

But at last, as they turned a corner, what should they see but the wicked old wolf lying fast asleep under a tree! There he lay



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snoring so loudly that the very boughs of the tree shook, and with such a sweet innocent smile on his face that no one would have believed he had just gobbled up six poor little kids.

‘You monster!’ said the goat, going up close to look at him, and wondering how she could punish him. And as she looked, she was sure that his skin moved up and down as if there was something alive inside him. Could it possibly be that he had swallowed the kids alive, and that they were then safe and sound?

The mother goat hurried back as quickly as she could to the cottage, and brought her scissors, and a needle and thread, and then very gently but deftly she slit a large hole in the wolf’s side. Out popped Nanny’s head, then Billy’s, and then followed all the other kids, and soon they were dancing and skipping round their mother as well and happy as ever. For the greedy old wolf had not stopped to bite his mouthfuls, but had just swallowed them whole.

‘Hush, my children,’ cried the delighted mother goat, ‘quietly, quietly! We must not wake the wolf yet.’

And she bade them bring her some large stones from the brook, and these she dropped into the wolf's inside, and then carefully sewed the slit up. So gently and cleverly did she do all this that the wolf never once stirred, but lay there snoring, fast asleep. And then the mother goat and her seven kids ran home as fast as their legs could carry them.

Presently, however, the wolf awoke, feeling very uncomfortable with a weight on his chest.

'I'm afraid I ate too many jujubes, or perhaps it is the chalk that makes me feel so thirsty,' he said, stretching himself. Then he got up and trotted off to the stream for a drink. But as soon as he moved, the stones rattled so loudly in his inside that he was quite frightened, and he cried out,

'Little kids, little kids,
Spare my poor bones,
You rattle and bang me
As if you were stones.'

And he hurried on, eager to get to the

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stream and have a great drink. But as he bent over, the stones rolled forward too, and he lost his balance and tumbled head over heels into the stream. The stones were so heavy that he could not scramble out, and so he sank to the bottom of the water and never came up again.

And that was how the wicked old wolf was drowned, and there was nothing left to disturb the peace and happiness of the mother goat and her seven little kids, who lived happily in the little cottage ever afterwards.

THE FROG PRINCE

In the golden days of long ago, when wishes had wings and could fly away, there lived a King who had six beautiful daughters. But the youngest Princess was the fairest of all, for her eyes were as blue as forget-me-nots, and her cheeks as pink as a rose leaf, and her hair like threads of gold. Even the sun loved to kiss her, and the sunbeams danced in her golden hair, so that, wherever she went, she seemed to carry the sunshine with her.

Not far from the King's palace there was a dark, dismal wood, where witches and evil magicians lived, and in the middle of the wood there was a lime-tree under which a fountain played.

One very hot day, when the Princess was tired of playing in the palace garden, she ran off to the wood, and wandered on in the cool green shade until she came to the bubbling

fountain. Here she sat down to rest, and presently she took her golden ball, which was her favourite plaything, and began to throw it up in the air and to catch it again. For this was the game she loved best of all. Higher and higher she threw it, shouting with joy as she caught it each time, until, alas! she missed it and it rolled away right into the fountain.

The Princess ran to the edge and looked in, but she was only in time to see her ball sink down and down in the clear water until it disappeared.

‘Oh! my ball, my beautiful golden ball!’ cried the Princess, bursting into tears. ‘Oh, what shall I do, and how shall I ever get it up again?’

‘What is the matter?’ asked a croaking voice at her feet. ‘Do not cry, Princess; your tears would soften a heart of stone.’

The Princess started and looked down to see where the voice came from, and there in the water she saw a frog who had thrust out his ugly flat head and was looking at her with dreadful little twinkling eyes.

‘Oh, is that you, old Flipperty-flop?’ said the

Princess. 'How can I help crying, when I have lost my beautiful golden ball?'

'What will you give me if I dive down and fetch it up for you?' asked the Frog.

'O you dear Thing!' cried the Princess, drying her eyes, 'if you will only do that I will give you anything you like to ask. You may have my pearl necklace or my loveliest silk frock, or even my little gold crown which I always wear.'

'I do not want your frocks or your crown,' answered the Frog. 'I will fetch your ball if you will promise to take me home with you to the palace and let me be your playmate. I must sit beside you on your chair, and eat out of your own little golden plate, and drink out of your glass. And at night I must sleep with you in your little warm bed with the silken coverlet.'

'I will promise anything, anything, only fetch my golden ball,' said the Princess. For she thought that a frog could never really expect to be a little girl's playmate, but that he would go back to the fountain and play with other frogs like himself.

So the Frog dived down, down, through the clear spring water, and in two minutes came up again, holding in his mouth the golden ball, which he threw on the grass.

'Oh, thank you, thank you,' said the Princess. And she snatched up the ball and set off running towards the palace as fast as she could.

'Stop, stop!' croaked the Frog. 'You promised to take me with you, and I cannot run as fast as that.'

But the Princess took no notice and only ran quicker, and when she reached the palace she soon forgot all about the kind Frog who had brought back her golden ball.

The next day, when she sat at dinner next to the King her father, with her own little golden plate set in front of her, she heard a very curious noise outside. It sounded as if something was hopping up the marble stairs—flipperty-flop, flipperty-flop—and then came a loud knock at the door and a voice that cried out, 'Open the door, loveliest Princess!'

The Princess jumped down at once and ran to open the door, wondering who it could be.

And when she looked out, what should she see sitting there on the topmost step, and swelling himself out till he looked like a large green ball, but the Frog she had met at the fountain! She banged the door before the Frog could put his nose in, and went back quickly to her dinner. But she looked so red and uncomfortable that the King noticed it.

‘Was that a giant at the door come to fetch you away?’ he asked.

‘No,’ answered the Princess. ‘It was only a horrid frog who lives in the fountain under the lime-tree, and who found my golden ball for me yesterday.’

‘What does he want here?’ asked the King. ‘Come, tell me the whole truth about it.’

Then the Princess began to cry, and told the King how she had promised that the Frog should come to the palace and be her play-mate, though she never thought he would really come.

‘A Princess must always keep her promises,’ said the King sternly, ‘just because she is a Princess. Go at once and open the door and bring the Frog in.’

And just then there came another loud knock at the door, and a croaking voice sang,

‘Open the door, my Princess so fair,
For one whom you know waits patiently
here.

Remember the promise but yesterday made
At the fountain so cool, ’neath the lime-
scented shade.’

So the Princess was obliged to go and open the door, and in hopped the great fat wet Frog, flipperty-flop, flipperty-flop, till he reached the Princess’s chair.

‘Lift me up,’ he croaked, ‘for I wish to sit next you.’

The Princess did not mean to do anything of the kind, but the King looked at her, so she stooped down at once and lifted the Frog on to the chair beside her.

‘Now, push your little golden plate nearer so that we can eat together, and put your glass where I can reach it,’ said the Frog as he wiped his wet fingers on her table-napkin.

The poor little Princess could not bear to

eat out of the same plate, and it made her feel quite ill to see him sipping the wine out of her glass, but she dared not disobey her father. There was worse to come, however, for when the Frog had finished (and he ate up everything except the salad, which was no treat to him) he said, 'Now carry me up to your bed-room, for I am tired, and we will rest together on your little silken bed.'

'You shall not sleep in my bed, and I will not touch you!' sobbed the Princess. But the King told her to lift up the Frog at once and carry him to her room.

So she picked him up between her thumb and first finger and held him as far away as possible, as she ran upstairs to her little room.

'There, you ugly toad,' she cried, as she threw him into a corner of her room, 'I hope you are happy now!'

But no sooner had the Princess climbed into bed and tucked herself under the silken coverlet, than the Frog popped out of the corner and sat on the velvet footstool by her bedside.

The Princess jumped up and seized the Frog in a rage. She raised him above her head and was just going to dash him against the wall, when she remembered that she was a Princess, and therefore must be kind and gentle to everything. The angry look died out of her blue eyes, and though she could not bear to think of the cold wet Frog nestling in her little white bed, she placed him on a corner of the silken coverlet.

But the moment the Frog touched the bed a wonderful thing happened !

The Princess rubbed her eyes and looked again, for she thought she must be dreaming. But no ! the great ugly Frog had disappeared and a handsome young Prince stood there, looking at her with kind beautiful eyes.

‘Thank you, you beautiful Princess !’ he said, ‘you have set me free at last.’

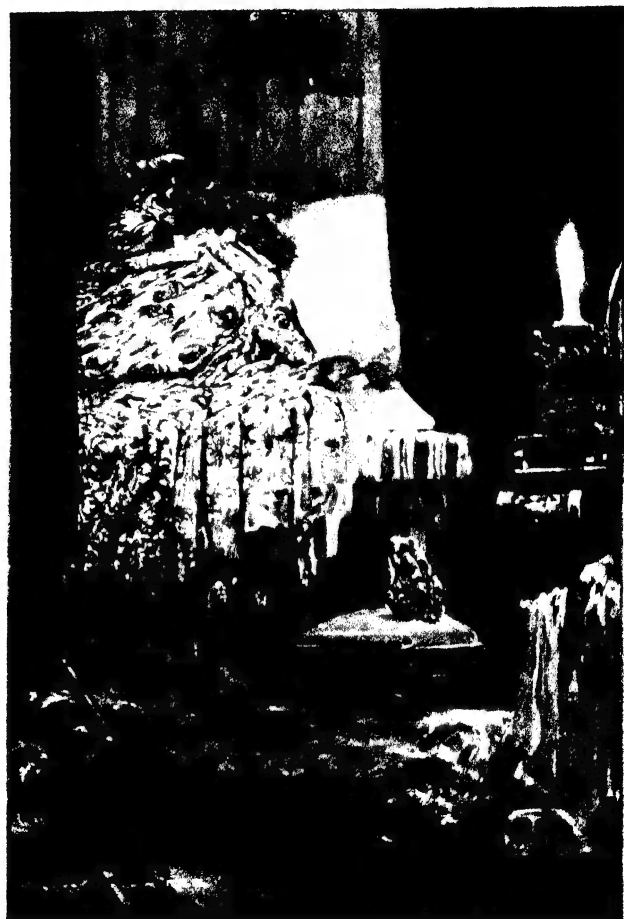
And then he told her how a wicked witch had weaved a spell around him and changed him into a frog, and how the spell could not

be broken until a King's daughter should make him her playmate and allow him to eat off her plate and sleep in her bed.

Then indeed the Princess was glad to think that she had not hurt the poor Frog, for at last she had a playfellow whom she loved better than any one else.

'Now I must go back to my kingdom,' said the Prince, 'but if you will marry me you shall come too.'

And the King was so pleased with the Prince that he said the wedding should take place at once, and there was great feasting and rejoicing. And the day after the wedding a golden coach, drawn by eight snow-white horses, dashed up to the palace gate, to carry the Prince and his bride back to his kingdom. The eight white horses had ostrich plumes on their heads, and their bits were made of pure gold, and the reins were of scarlet leather. And behind the carriage rode the Prince's faithful servant, whose heart had nearly burst with grief when his master was turned into a frog. And as they rode gaily off, bowing to the crowd, while the horses pranced, and the



bells jingled, the Prince and Princess were startled by hearing a terrific crack behind them. They thought part of the carriage must be broken, and they turned round in alarm to ask the faithful servant what the noise meant.

‘Do not be afraid, my master,’ answered the servant with a smile. ‘When you were turned into a frog I bound my heart with iron bands to keep it from breaking, and the noise you heard was only the cracking of the iron bands, which are no longer needed.’

So on they rode, with hearts free and happy, and as they passed by the fountain underneath the lime-tree, they heard a voice which seemed to come from the bubbling spring,

‘As deep as my waters, as pure as my
spring

Is the heart of this beautiful child of the
King.

She ne’er shall repent her the promise
she made

By the fount where the lime-tree hath cast
its green shade.’

RAPUNZEL

A man and his wife once lived in a little house whose windows overlooked a most beautiful garden. This garden belonged to a wicked old witch, and no one was ever allowed to enter it. But the man's wife spent most of her time looking into the garden, for though the wall round it was very high, her window was higher still. There she would sit all day long gazing out of her window, and sighing because she was so lonely and had no baby to play with. And one day, when she was looking into the witch's garden, she saw a bed of fresh green curly lettuce, and suddenly it seemed to her the one thing in the world she really wanted. But, of course, she could not get it, and each day she wanted it more and more until she grew quite pale and thin and would eat nothing.

Now her husband was grieved to see her

pinning away, and he was afraid if she did not get the salad she might die.

So when it was dark, he climbed over the high wall and quickly gathered two handfuls of the lettuce and brought it to his wife. She ate it at once, and liked it so much that she immediately wanted more, and she gave him no peace until he promised to go back again the next night. But this time the old witch was watching and came hobbling towards him.

‘How dare you steal my salad!’ she screamed.

‘Indeed, madam, I beg your pardon,’ said the man, trembling with fear. ‘I was forced to steal your salad, for my poor wife was dying for want of it.’

This softened the wrath of the old witch, and she promised to forgive him on one condition.

‘Your wife is always sighing for a baby, and if the fairies bring one to her, remember it must be given at once to me.’ And the old witch shook her stick at him.

This was a great grief to the poor man and

his wife. For very soon a little baby was born, and the old witch walked in, reminded them of the promise, and carried off the child.

Now the baby soon grew into a beautiful girl, and the old witch called her Rapunzel (which is the witch-word for salad). She was so lovely that the witch began to fear that some one would run away with her. So she built a tall tower with no door in it and no stair, but only one little window at the very top. And there she kept Rapunzel securely shut up.

But every evening the old witch would come to see how Rapunzel was getting on. And as there was no door to the tower, she used to stand under the little window and call—

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
That I may climb without a stair.’

And Rapunzel would let down her long plaits, which were as fine as spun silk and the colour of golden corn, and the old witch would climb up by them into the little window.

Now it happened that one day a Prince was riding through the forest and came to the

strange-looking tower. And while he stood gazing up at it he heard some one singing inside. It was such a beautiful song that the music went singing on in his heart all that day and all that night, and the next day he felt he must go back to listen to the song once again. But when he came near the tower he saw an old witch come hobbling along and stand below the little window and cry out,

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
That I may climb without a stair.’

Then two long golden plaits were let down and the old witch climbed into the little window.

‘So that is the way in,’ said the Prince to himself.

Very early next day he came back to the forest, and standing under the window he cried out,

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
That I may climb without a stair.’

And when the beautiful plaits were let down

he seized them in both hands and climbed swiftly up to the window.

Rapunzel started back in fear and surprise when she saw a stranger climbing into the window. She had never seen any one but the old witch, and did not know who this could be. But the Prince was so kind and gentle that she soon forgot to be afraid.

Every day he came to see her, and soon they planned a way of escape. He brought her silken threads which she wove into a rope, and when it was long enough they were to climb down and ride off together far away from the witch's wood.

The old witch never dreamed that any one knew the way to the secret tower, and all would have gone well had not Rapunzel said one day, after pulling the old witch up, 'I wonder why you are so much heavier than the Prince who comes to see me?'

'The Prince!' shrieked the old witch. 'You wicked child, how dare you let any one in!'

Then in a rage she twisted her bony hand in the beautiful golden hair, and seizing a pair of scissors, cut off both the plaits.

Then she took Rapunzel away into the heart of the forest and left her there, to wander about, lonely and miserable, all by herself.

That night, when the Prince came beneath the little window, he called up as usual,

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
That I may climb without a stair.’

And the old witch let down the two golden plaits, and when he climbed into the little window, there she stood snarling and grinning at him instead of his beautiful Rapunzel.

‘The pretty bird has flown,’ she cried, ‘and the cat will now scratch out your eyes.’

The poor Prince turned quickly and leaped from the window in his despair. Luckily he fell into a thorn bush, and the fall did not kill him, but the thorns scratched out both his eyes, so he wandered blindly on through the forest, groping his way and mourning for his lost Rapunzel.

But as he wandered deeper and deeper into the heart of the forest, the music of a beautiful song came floating towards him, and following the sound he came to the place where Rapunzel,

lonely and heart-broken, sat singing sadly to herself.

The moment she saw him she knew it was her dear Prince, and she ran and put her arms round him and wept for very joy. And two great tears like pearls rolled down and touched his poor eyes, and immediately the scratches made by the thorns were healed, so that he could see quite clearly.

Then hand in hand they found their way out of the forest, and when they reached the royal palace of the Prince they were married and lived happily ever after.

SNOWDROP AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

One winter day, when the snow was falling in great feathery flakes, a Queen sat sewing at the open window of her palace. The window-frames of the Queen's room were all made of ebony, and the snowflakes looked whiter than ever as they danced past the black wood. The Queen was not thinking of her work as she sewed, and presently the needle slipped and pricked her finger so deeply that three great drops of blood rose like red beads and then dropped on to the white snow.

‘Oh, how lovely!’ cried the Queen, clapping her hands as she saw how beautiful the red colour looked upon the snow. ‘How I should like to have a little daughter as white as the snow, as red as the blood, and as black as my ebony window-frame.’

In a short time the Queen had her wish, for the fairies brought her a little daughter, who was the most beautiful baby that ever was born. Her skin was as fair and white as the snowflakes, her lips were the wonderful red colour of blood, and her hair was as black as ebony. And the happy Queen called her little daughter Snowdrop.

But when Snowdrop was still quite a little baby the Queen-mother died, and before very long the King married another Princess. Now the new Queen was very beautiful indeed, but so proud and haughty that she could not bear to think that any one in the world could be as beautiful as she was. She was not a good Queen, for she knew all about evil charms and black spells, and her most precious possession was a magic mirror. This mirror could always tell who was the most beautiful person in the world, and every day the Queen would draw the silken curtain aside and look into its wonderful shining depth, and say,

‘ Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Have I the fairest face of all? ’

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And the mirror would answer,

‘Never in all the world was seen
A fairer face than thine, O Queen.’

Now the Queen did not take much notice of little Snowdrop, and did not see how beautiful she was growing, until one day when the magic mirror suddenly gave quite a different answer to her proud question. For when she said quite carelessly,

‘Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Have I the fairest face of all?’—

what was the Queen’s surprise and rage to hear the mirror say,

‘However fair thy face may be,
Snowdrop is fairer far than thee.’

‘This will never do,’ thought the Queen. ‘I must find some way of getting rid of the child.’

So she spoke secretly to one of the royal huntsmen, and bade him take the Princess Snowdrop out into the wood and see that she never came back.

She, of course, meant the huntsman to kill Snowdrop, but the man had a kind heart, and when the child wept and asked him to spare her life, she looked so beautiful that he could do her no harm.

'Run away, then, into the wood, and never come back to the palace,' he said. He felt quite sure that the wild beasts would soon eat her up, so he went back and told the wicked Queen that Snowdrop was dead.

But Snowdrop wandered on and on through the forest, safe and unharmed. The wild beasts would not touch her, and the birds sang to her as she went, and everything in the forest loved her, for she was as good as she was beautiful. On and on she went, until she came in the evening to a tiny cottage on the side of a hill. She was so tired and footsore that she could go no further, so she opened the little door and went in to rest.

It was the smallest and neatest cottage that Snowdrop had ever seen, indeed it was almost like a doll's house. In the middle of the room stood a little table, and round it were placed seven small chairs. The table was neatly laid

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with seven knives and forks, seven spoons, seven plates, and seven tiny wine-glasses, and at the other end of the room Snowdrop saw seven little beds spread with white counterpanes.

There was no one in the cottage, so Snowdrop made herself quite at home. She sat first on one chair and then on the other six, one after another, to see which was the most comfortable. Then, as she was hungry she went round the table breaking little crusts of bread off each loaf, and taking little sips of wine out of each glass, until she had had enough. Then she went over and tried the little white beds, and when she found which was the softest, she curled herself up in it and fell fast asleep.

Presently the seven dwarfs, to whom the cottage belonged, came home from their day's work and went into their little cottage. They were all very tired, for they had been digging for gold in the mountain all day, and they went at once to the table to begin supper. But the moment they had lighted their lamp, they saw that some one had been meddling with their things.

'Who has been sitting on my chair?' cried the first dwarf.

'Who has been eating off my plate?' said the second.

'Who has been nibbling at my bread?' said the third.

'Who has been drinking my wine?' said the fourth.

'Who has been using my spoon?' said the fifth.

'And cutting with my knife?' said the sixth.

'And meddling with my fork?' said the seventh.

They stared all round to see who could have been there, and when they looked at the row of little white beds, they gave a great shout of surprise, and crowded round the one on which little Snowdrop lay asleep.

'What a beautiful child!' said the first dwarf.

'She is as lovely as an angel,' said another.

'Her skin is as white as snow,' said a third.

'And see how red her lips and cheeks are,' said a fourth.

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'Her hair is as black as ebony,' said a fifth.

And then all together they said, 'She is the most beautiful child we have ever seen.'

Very gently they covered her up and noiselessly crept into their own beds, for they did not want to wake her. The seventh dwarf had, of course, no bed, but he slept an hour with each of his brothers by turns, and though it was rather a squeeze, he was glad to think that their beautiful visitor was resting in his nice soft bed.

In the morning, when Snowdrop awoke, she was rather startled to see the seven queer little men standing round her, but they had such kind faces, and spoke so gently, that she was not frightened at all, and soon told them all her story.

'Ah!' said the eldest dwarf, 'it must have been the wicked Queen's doing, and you must never go back to her again.'

'Will you stay here with us?' cried all the other dwarfs together. 'Will you cook our supper and make our beds and sweep and dust the cottage?'

'That I will gladly do,' said Snowdrop. And

she began at once to get ready the seven little bowls of porridge for breakfast.

But before the dwarfs set out to dig for gold in the mountains, they told Snowdrop that she must be very careful never to leave the cottage while they were away and never to let any one come in.

'For,' they said, 'we are sure the wicked Queen will try to find you out.'

Snowdrop promised to do as she was bid, and began merrily to dust and sweep the cottage. And in the evenings when the dwarfs came home they had the merriest times as they all clustered round Snowdrop. One would hold the wool for her to wind, and another would show her picture-books, and the smallest dwarf of all, who was an artist, would bring out his paint-pots and paint her portrait.

Now in the palace far away, the Queen had been told by the huntsman that Snowdrop was dead, so she began to feel happy once more, and she hurried away to her magic mirror to see what it would say to her now. And as she drew back the curtain and looked at her own



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beautiful reflection, she smiled with pleasure, and said gaily,

‘Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Have I the fairest face of all?’

But the mirror answered truthfully,

‘Fair is thy face indeed, O Queen,
But a fairer face is still to be seen,
In the home of the dwarfs far over the
fells,
Where Snowdrop in peace and happiness
dwells.’

‘I have been deceived!’ cried the Queen.
‘Snowdrop is not dead. But wherever she is,
she cannot hide from me, and I will find her
and kill her.’

Then she stained her face till it was quite brown, and dressed herself like an old pedlar woman, and taking with her a basket of ribbons and laces, she set out to find Snowdrop.

Now, as the Queen knew all about magic, she could understand what the trees and grass and flowers said, and they whispered to her as she went along, ‘Yes, we have seen Snowdrop.’

'She passed this way,' said the grass, 'for we felt the pressure of her little bare feet.'

'She went this way,' said the bushes, 'for we caught a piece of her pinafore as she passed.'

'Yes, indeed, this was the way she went,' cried all the flowers, 'for we gave her our loveliest buds.'

So the Queen soon found her way over the fells to the cottage where the seven dwarfs lived. She peeped through the window and saw Snowdrop sitting by the fire busily mending the dwarfs' socks.

'Come out, pretty one,' she called, tapping at the window, bending very low and pretending to be quite old. 'I have lovely ribbons and laces to sell.'

'Oh, I must not come out while the dwarfs are away,' said Snowdrop, jumping up and coming to the window, 'but I should like to see what you have in your basket.'

'Let me come in, then,' said the old woman.

'Well, I don't see why you shouldn't,' said Snowdrop, and she opened the door and let

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the old woman in. 'I want a new blue lace badly.'

'Here is a lovely one,' said the old woman, 'and see! I will put it in for you, and lace you up.'

And she began to pull the lace so tightly that very soon Snowdrop could no longer breathe, and fell down, lying as if she were dead.

'Ha, ha!' laughed the wicked Queen, 'my magic mirror will give a different answer now.' And she hurried away, leaving Snowdrop lying there on the ground.

In the evening when the dwarfs came home they were nearly heart-broken to find their dear little Snowdrop lying there lifeless and cold. But they quickly cut the lace and fanned her till her breath came back and the colour stole into her cheeks. Then they asked her what had happened, and when Snowdrop told them about the old pedlar woman, they said, 'That was the wicked Queen, and it was very wrong of you to let her in. You must promise not to disobey us again.'

Now when the Queen had reached home and had washed the stains from her face, she went

straight to her magic mirror, expecting that it would tell her that she was now indeed the fairest of all. But what was her disappointment and rage when the mirror gave back the same reply.

‘Snowdrop cannot be dead, after all,’ she said ; ‘I must go to see her again.’ And then she went into her little magic room and took out a beautiful tortoiseshell comb and packed it into her basket. The comb was lovely to look at, but it was so poisonous that if any one combed their hair with it, they would fall down dead at once. This time the Queen dressed herself quite differently, and when she arrived at the dwarfs’ cottage, Snowdrop did not know her.

‘May I come in and show you my beautiful combs?’ said the old woman, tapping at the window.

But Snowdrop remembered the dwarfs’ warning, and said sadly, ‘I must not let you come in, and so I cannot see what you have in your basket.’

‘How could I harm you, my dear?’ asked the old woman : ‘see what a beautiful comb this

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is. Only let me in, and I will comb your lovely black hair with it, and then you shall have it for nothing.'

So Snowdrop opened the door, and the old woman hobbled in, and began to comb her long black hair, and as she combed the poison began to work, and in a few minutes Snowdrop lay on the floor as white and still as death. Then the wicked Queen left the comb sticking in her hair and hurried away as fast as she could. This time the dwarfs thought that Snowdrop was really dead, for though they pulled out the magic comb and did all that they could think of, it was a long time before Snowdrop opened her eyes and showed that she was alive.

'Why did you disobey our order again?' they asked her. 'We knew that the wicked Queen would find you out.'

Then Snowdrop promised she would never let any one in again, and this time she meant to keep her promise.

But the wicked Queen soon found out from her magic mirror that Snowdrop was still alive, and this time she thought of a plan that could not fail. In her magic room she carefully pre-

pared a poisoned apple which looked rosy and tempting, but which was really so deadly that the smallest bite would kill any one at once. But so cleverly did she poison it, that half of it was harmless and only the rosy-cheeked side was poisonous. Then the Queen dressed herself up like a farmer's wife and once more set out for the house of the seven dwarfs.

But this time, when she tapped at the window, Snowdrop told her to go away at once as she would let no one come into the cottage.

'But I am quite an honest old woman and have nothing but apples to sell,' said the wicked Queen. 'See here, I will give you one for nothing, and, to show you that it is quite good, I will eat half myself.'

So she took the beautiful rosy-cheeked apple and cut it in half, taking care to keep for Snowdrop the poisonous side, while she ate the other.

Snowdrop could not resist the temptation when she saw the old woman biting the apple, so she opened the window and took the rosy half and began at once to eat it. But the moment she had swallowed one tiny bite she

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dropped down on the floor and lay there white and still.

‘Ha-ha!’ laughed the wicked Queen, peering through the window. ‘The dwarfs won’t be able to wake you this time, though you are so fair.’ And she hurried home to question her magic mirror. Imagine her delight when it replied—

‘Never in all the world was seen
A fairer face than thine, O Queen.’

When the dwarfs came home at night they found Snowdrop lying there quite dead. They cut her lace, and they combed her hair, and did everything they could, but she never moved or opened her eyes.

Then the seven dwarfs sat round and mourned for their dear child seven days, and when it was time to bury her they could not bear to think of putting her into the cold dark earth, for she was still so beautiful with her fair white skin, her red lips, and lovely black hair. So they made a glass coffin and laid her in it, and wrote upon it in golden letters, ‘This is Snowdrop, the daughter of a King.’ Then

they carried the glass coffin out on the hill-side, and one of the dwarfs kept watch over it night and day. The birds too came and mourned for Snowdrop, first an owl, then a raven, and then a white dove.

Now it happened that one day a young Prince who was out hunting, lost his way and came to the cottage of the seven dwarfs. And on the hill-side he saw a glass coffin guarded by the faithful little men. When he came near and saw Snowdrop lying there as if asleep, he thought he had never before seen anything so lovely. He at once offered the dwarfs all his treasures if they would sell Snowdrop to him, but they only shook their heads and said, 'We would not sell her for all the gold in the world.'

'Then will you not give her to me?' asked the Prince. 'I love her with all my heart, and I feel that I cannot live without her.'

So, though the dwarfs would not sell their dear Snowdrop, they gave her to the young Prince, because they were so sorry for him. But as the royal servants were lifting the coffin, to carry it down the hill, one of them slipped on

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a loose stone, and gave the coffin such a jerk that the piece of poisoned apple flew out of Snowdrop's throat. In a moment she was sitting up, and had lifted the lid of the glass coffin. 'Where am I?' she asked wonderingly.

'You are with me,' said the Prince, and when he had told her all that had happened he said, 'I love you more than all the world beside. Will you come with me to the palace, and be my bride?'

Snowdrop loved the Prince too, as she listened to him, so she said she would do whatever he wished. Then they went on together to the palace, and soon all the marriage invitations were sent out and everything was ready for the wedding.

Now the wicked Queen was one of the invited guests, and she dressed herself in the most splendid robes, feeling sure that no one there would be half as beautiful as she was. But before she set out, she once again drew aside the curtain and looked into the magic mirror and said,

'Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Have I the fairest face of all?'

Think then what was her surprise and dismay to hear the mirror answer,

‘Fair, O Queen, does thy beauty shine,
But the bride has a fairer face than thine.’

So angry was she that she almost made up her mind to stay at home, but she was so curious to see what this beautiful bride was like, that at last she set out to go to the wedding. And when she arrived at the palace, who should she see but Snowdrop standing by the Prince's side looking more beautiful than ever !

The wicked Queen was so furious that she almost choked with rage, and when she got home her jealousy and anger made her so ill that she went to bed and died.

But Snowdrop only grew more and more beautiful, and she and the Prince lived happily together ever after. She never forgot her friends the dwarfs, and there were seven little chairs and seven little beds always ready for them when they came to visit her. And they all agreed that the kindest and loveliest Queen in all the world was their own dear child, Snowdrop.

THE WANDERING MINSTRELS

Truly this seemed a cruel, ungrateful world! The poor old donkey had done his work faithfully for so many years, and it was not his fault that he could no longer pull heavy loads, or do hard work. And yet his master began now to grumble and wonder how he could put an end to him and then make use of his skin.

But the old donkey did not mean to wait quietly for that. Early one morning when no one was about he trotted off, and taking the road to Bremen, he determined to go there and join the town band. He had not gone far on his way when he came upon an old dog, who lay panting at the side of the road, as if he had been running a long distance.

‘What makes you pant like that, old fellow?’ asked the Donkey.

‘Alas,’ said the Dog, ‘I am growing old, and I can no longer hunt or be of any use to

my master. He made up his mind that I was to die, so I ran away before he could catch me. But now what am I to do to earn a living?’

‘Come with me,’ said the Donkey; ‘I am going to Bremen to join the town band. If I play the flute, you might beat the drum.’

‘I will come gladly,’ said the old Dog; and so they limped off happily together.

By and by, a little further on, they overtook a cat, sitting by the roadside with a face as long as three wet days.

‘Who has been treading on your toes, Tommy?’ asked the Donkey.

‘How could you expect me to look cheerful?’ answered the Cat mournfully. ‘I am getting old and my teeth are worn out. I like to sit by the fire instead of running about catching mice, and so my mistress wanted to drown me. But I ran away, and now the question is what is to become of me?’

‘Come with us,’ said the Donkey; ‘we are going to town to join a band. You are famous for your night songs, and it will be just the life for you.’

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'Agreed,' cried the Cat, and he trotted cheerfully off with the Donkey and the Dog.

Before they had gone very far they came to a farmyard where a cock sat on the gate, crowing so loudly that it quite frightened the travellers.

'Why are you making such a noise?' asked the Donkey. 'You have the most piercing voice I ever heard.'

'I mean to make as much noise as I can,' answered the Cock. 'I've always told the farmer's wife when to expect fine weather, but she is most ungrateful, and is going to twist my neck and cook me for supper to-night to make a feast for her visitors. So I mean to crow as long as I have a voice.'

'Don't wait to be cooked, Mr. Redcomb,' said the Donkey. 'Come with us, for we are going to join the town band. Your fine voice will be a great help.'

So the Cock flew down, and they all went on merrily together.

But they could not reach the town that night, and so they halted in a wood to rest until morn-

ing. The Donkey and the Dog lay down under a tree, but the Cat and Cock thought they would be safer among the branches. The Cat did not climb very high, but the Cock flew up to the topmost bough and took a look round before he went to sleep.

‘Ha, I see a light!’ he cried out. ‘There must be a house not far off. We might get something to eat there, and at any rate it would be warmer and more comfortable than this.’

All the travellers agreed to go on, and presently they came to a red-roofed house, where the light was shining from an open window.

The Donkey being the tallest, put his forefeet on to the window ledge and looked in.

‘What do you see?’ whispered the Dog and the Cat and the Cock.

‘I see a table spread for a feast,’ answered the Donkey in a low voice, ‘and round the table a band of robbers are sitting, eating and drinking.’

‘That’s the very place for us!’ they all cried softly together.

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‘Yes, if only we could get there,’ answered the Donkey.

Then they all began to think which would be the best way to get in, and at last they hit upon a plan.

First of all the Donkey stood firm until the Dog climbed on to his back. Then the Cat scrambled on to the Dog, and last of all the Cock flew on to the Cat’s head. Then just as the moon began to rise the Donkey gave the signal for the band to strike up, and stood upright on his hind legs. The Dog howled, the Cat miawed, the Cock crew, and the Donkey brayed, and then they all sprang forward and came crashing through the window into the room where the robbers were feasting.

The noise alone frightened the men terribly, but when the travellers came tumbling through the window, that was more than the robbers could stand. They jumped up and rushed from the house into the dark wood, feeling sure they were being chased by demons.

Then the Wandering Minstrels made themselves quite at home, and ate such a good supper that any one would have thought they

had not tasted food for weeks. When they had finished, as they felt tired after their journey, they put out the lights and went to bed, each choosing the place he thought most comfortable.

The Donkey went into the yard to sleep on a bed of straw, the Dog curled himself up in a corner behind the door, the Cat crept close to the warm ashes on the hearth, and the Cock went to roost on one of the highest rafters.

But after a while, when the robbers saw that the lights were out and all was quiet, they began to think that they had been too easily frightened.

‘Let us go and see if there really are any demons there,’ they said.

So one of them went back and searched through the house, but found nothing stirring. Then he went to light a candle, and seeing the Cat’s two round, shining eyes, fancied they were red-hot coals on the hearth and poked a match at them to light it. But the Cat did not like such manners, and flew at him and scratched his face with her sharp claws. The robber in a great fright turned to run away, but



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as he passed the door the Dog sprang up and bit a piece out of his leg. Faster still he ran, but in the yard the Donkey kicked out with his hind legs and gave him a terrible blow, while the Cock, waking up, screamed his shrillest 'Cock-a-doodle-do.'

When the robber got back to his companions he was trembling with fright, and told them the most horrible tale.

'In the house,' he said, 'there is a dreadful old witch sitting by the fire, and she flew at me, and nearly scratched my eyes out. Then behind the door there is a man with a dagger, and he stabbed me in the leg. But worst of all, in the courtyard there is a terrible monster who nearly knocked me down, while on the rafters sits a judge, and he cried out, "Bring the rogue to me."'

After this none of the robbers dared go back, and the Wandering Minstrels were so pleased with their new home, that they never thought of leaving it. Indeed, I expect they are living there to this day.

THE GOLDEN BIRD

In the far-away time of long ago, there lived a King, whose palace was set in the midst of the most beautiful garden that ever was seen. All sorts of lovely flowers grew there, and the fruit-trees bore the most delicious fruits, but the most precious and wonderful thing in all the garden was a golden apple-tree.

The King was very careful of these golden apples, and as they grew ripe, he ordered that they should be counted every night and morning, so that he might be sure that none were stolen.

But one morning when the gardener counted the apples he found that one was gone! The King and all the court were in great distress, and it was at once agreed that a watch must be set to try to discover the thief. The King's eldest son said that he would like to watch the first night—and so he did, for an hour or

two, but then he fell asleep. And when he awoke in the morning and the apples were counted as usual, behold! another apple was gone. Then the second son said it was his turn to watch. But he too fell asleep, and, while he slept, the third apple was taken.

Now the youngest Prince, though very good-natured and kind, was thought to be rather a stupid boy, and no one took much notice of him. So when he asked to be allowed to watch the third night, the King was quite scornful.

'Do you think you will succeed when both your brothers have failed?' he asked.

But the youngest Prince begged so hard to be allowed to have his turn that at last the King consented.

The boy was determined that at any rate he would not go to sleep, so he kept watch all night, and when the clock struck twelve, he saw a beautiful golden bird fly down and begin to peck off one of the apples. The Prince fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at the bird, but the arrow only struck one of the feathers out of its tail. Away flew the bird, but the golden feather fell to the ground, and next morning

the Prince brought it to his father and told him all that he had seen.

Then the King called his nobles together and showed them the golden feather, and they all declared that it was worth more than all the other treasures in the kingdom.

‘If one feather is so precious,’ said the King, ‘I must have the whole bird.’

So the eldest son set out at once to search for the Golden Bird, very sure that he would soon find it and bring it home to his father.

He had not gone far on his way when he came to a wood, and there he saw a Fox warming himself in the sun. He lifted his bow and arrow to shoot him, but the Fox cried out, ‘Do not shoot me, noble Prince, and I will give you some good advice. I know you are looking for the Golden Bird, and to-night you will come to a little village. There you will find two inns opposite each other. One of the inns will look gay and inviting, but do not go into it. Go instead to the other inn, however dull and poor it may seem.’

‘How can a stupid animal like you give me good advice and tell me what I ought to do?’

cried the Prince scornfully. And he drew his bow and sent an arrow flying after the Fox. But the Fox was too quick, and the arrow never reached him as he bounded away.

Then the Prince went on, and at nightfall he came to a little village where he found the two inns just as the Fox had said. One of them was lighted up, and the sound of music and merry-making came from the open windows, but the other was dark and dull.

‘I would be foolish indeed, if I chose to go to that poor, mean place!’ said the Prince.

So he went to the gay-looking inn, and there he feasted and danced until he forgot all about his father and the Golden Bird.

When some time had passed and the eldest son did not return, the second Prince thought he would set out to find the Golden Bird. He, too, passed along by the edge of the wood, and, like his brother, saw a fox sitting in the sunshine. The Fox gave him the same good advice, but the second son only laughed and would have shot him if the Fox had not escaped.

And when the Prince came to the little village

he saw his brother beckoning to him from the window of the gay little inn, so he never even thought of taking the Fox's advice. He went in at once to meet his brother, and he, too, soon forgot all about his home and his quest.

Then the youngest Prince, seeing that neither of his brothers came back, begged the King, his father, that he might be allowed to go and search for the Golden Bird.

'What use will it be to send you?' asked the King. But at last he gave his consent, and the youngest Prince set out.

At the edge of the wood he met the Fox, just as his brothers had done, and the Fox gave him the same good advice, and then begged that his life might be spared.

But instead of trying to shoot him, the Prince only looked at him kindly.

'Run away, little Fox,' he said, 'why should I do you any harm?'

'Thank you, kind Prince,' said the Fox. 'You will never be sorry that you spared my life. Now, jump on my tail and I will carry you as fast as the wind.'

So the Fox held his tail out straight, and

the Prince sat upon it. And away they went over hill and dale, so fast that the wind whistled through the Prince's hair.

And when they came at nightfall to the village, the Fox stopped before the door of the dull little inn, where the Prince got down and went in to rest for the night. Early next morning he started off again, and had not gone far from the village when the Fox met him.

'Now I will tell you what you must do next,' said the Fox. 'Go straight on until you come to a great castle guarded by soldiers. Walk past them without any fear, for they will all be fast asleep. And when you have entered the castle, go through all the rooms until you reach the one where the Golden Bird is hanging in a common wooden cage. Bring the bird away as quickly as you can, but whatever you do, do not put it into the golden cage which stands close by. If you do that, you will repent it.'

Then the Fox held his tail out straight, and the Prince sat himself on it once more, and away they flew over hill and dale, so fast

that the wind whistled through the Prince's hair.

Very soon they came to the grand castle of the Golden Bird, and the Prince walked boldly past the sleeping soldiers, and through all the rooms until he came to the one in which the Golden Bird hung in the wooden cage. Three golden apples were lying near the cage, and the Prince knew they were those that had been carried off from his father's garden.

Now the Golden Bird looked so beautiful with its shining feathers that it seemed a shame to leave it in such a common cage, especially when a splendid golden one stood ready close by. So the Prince changed the cages in spite of the Fox's warning.

But the moment the bird was inside the golden cage it began to scream so loudly that all the guards and soldiers woke up and came running in. They seized the young Prince and carried him off to the dungeon, and the next day he was brought before the King of the castle.

He had to confess that he had tried to steal

the Golden Bird, and of course he was at once sentenced to be put to death.

‘But I will give you one chance,’ said the King. ‘If you can bring me the Golden Horse I will not only forgive you, but you shall have the Golden Bird as your reward.’

So the Prince set off again, this time to look for the Golden Horse. And outside the castle he found the faithful Fox waiting for him.

‘You don’t deserve my help,’ said the Fox severely, ‘since you did exactly what I told you not to do. But I am sorry for you, and I will help you once more. Now go straight along this road till you come to a royal palace, and in the stables you will find the Golden Horse. The grooms who guard it will be fast asleep, and you must be careful not to wake them. And whatever you do, you must put the old leather saddle on the horse, and not the splendid golden one that hangs close by.’

Then the Fox held his tail out straight and the Prince sat upon it. And away they went over hill and dale, so fast that the wind whistled through the Prince’s hair.

Before long they came to the royal palace of the Golden Horse, and the Prince easily found his way to the stables. The grooms were fast asleep, and the Prince was very careful not to wake them. But when he took down the old leather saddle and looked at the beautiful Golden Horse, he felt he really could not put it on.

‘It is such a very common old saddle,’ he said to himself. ‘I do not think it would be right to put such a thing on this beautiful animal.’ So he took down instead the golden saddle which was hanging ready to his hand. But the moment he had put the golden saddle on, the horse began to neigh so loudly that all the grooms awoke, and they seized the Prince and carried him before the King.

‘You must be put to death at once,’ said the King, ‘unless you can bring me the Beautiful Princess who lives in the golden palace. If you can do this you will not only save your life, but you shall have the Golden Horse as a reward.’

The poor Prince was thankful to think there was a chance of saving his life, so he set off

at once in search of the golden palace. He had not gone far when, to his great joy, he spied the Fox waiting for him.

‘Why did you not do as I told you?’ asked the Fox. ‘If you had taken my advice you would by this time have had both the Horse and the Golden Bird. But though you don’t deserve it, I will help you once more, for you spared my life. You must now go straight on till you come to the golden palace and there you must hide until the evening, when the Princess goes to her bath. You must then step out and kiss her, and she will promise to go off with you at once. But whatever you do, do not allow her to say good-bye to her father and mother, but carry her off as quickly as possible.’

Then the Fox held his tail out straight and the Prince jumped up, and away they went over hill and dale, so fast that the wind whistled through the Prince’s hair.

And when they came to the golden palace, the Prince hid himself away till the evening, and waited till the Beautiful Princess passed along to her bath. Then he sprang out and

kissed her cheek, and as soon as she felt the kiss and saw the Prince, she loved him with all her heart, and said she would go with him wherever he would. 'Only let me say good-bye to my father and mother,' she said.

'That I cannot do,' said the Prince. 'You must come away with me at once.'

But she wept and looked so beautiful that he had not the heart to refuse, and so he told her she might do as she wished.

But the moment the Princess entered her mother's room, every one in the palace woke up, and the Prince was seized and carried off to prison.

The next day the King sent for him to tell him he must lose his life.

'But you can save it on one condition,' said the King. 'You see this great mountain that shuts out all the view in front of the palace? If you can clear it away in eight days, I will not only pardon you, but you shall marry the Princess.'

The mountain was very big and the Prince had only a small spade, but he dug and dug for seven days and then sat down in despair.

For with all his digging he had only cleared away a tiny corner. But just then something warm and soft rubbed against his knee, and looking down he saw his old friend the Fox.

'I suppose I must help you once more,' he said, as the Prince hung his head with shame. 'Go to sleep now, and I will finish your work.'

And when the Prince woke up in the morning the whole of the great mountain was cleared away, and there was a most beautiful view from the palace windows.

So the Prince went in and asked for his reward, and the King was obliged to give him the Princess as he had promised.

Away they rode together, and before long the Fox met them.

'That is well,' said he, 'but you ought also to have the Horse and the Golden Bird, for they both belong to the Beautiful Princess.'

'But how am I to get them?' asked the Prince.

'Trust me, and do exactly as I tell you,' said the Fox, 'and you shall have them both.'

Then he told the Prince to ride on until he should come to the palace of the Golden Horse, and there present the Beautiful Princess to the King.

‘They will next bring out the Golden Horse,’ continued the Fox. ‘You must mount, and then begin to say good-bye. But be sure you say good-bye to the Princess last. And as you lean down to clasp her hand, hold it tightly and swing her up in front of you on the saddle. Then gallop away and fear nothing. No one can overtake the Golden Horse, for he goes faster than the wind.’

The Prince did exactly as the Fox told him, and when he had mounted the Golden Horse, he swung the Princess up in front of him and was off before any one could stop him.

‘Well done!’ said the Fox, who was waiting for him further on. ‘And now you must get the Golden Bird. Leave the Princess here with me, and take the horse to the castle of the Golden Bird. They will be so delighted to see the Horse that they will bring out the Bird at once. Take the cage in your hands

and ride off before any one guesses what you mean to do.'

This time the Prince did again exactly as he was told, and very soon he rode off with the Golden Bird, and met the Fox and the Beautiful Princess who were waiting for him.

'What can I do to reward you for all your help, dear Fox?' asked the Prince, as the Fox was going to leave them.

'There is only one thing you can do,' answered the Fox. 'When we come to the wood where you first saw me, will you shoot me and then cut off my head and my paws?'

'That would be a pretty way of showing my gratitude!' said the Prince. 'I can never do that!'

'Well, there is no other way,' said the Fox sadly. 'I must leave you now if you will not do what I ask. But before I go, there are two things I wish to warn you against. Do not spend your money on people who ought to be hanged, and do not sit on the edge of a well.'

'What a funny animal you are!' said the Prince. 'Why should I want to spend my

money on people who ought to be hanged? And I am sure I don't in the least want to sit on the edge of a well.'

But the Fox made no answer. He only said good-bye, and quickly disappeared in the wood.

So the Prince galloped on, with the Beautiful Princess seated on the saddle behind him, and the Golden Bird perched on his wrist.

Ere long they came to the little village where the two inns were, and all the children ran out to see them pass, and even the geese waddled along to see the wonderful sight. But at the further end of the village a great crowd was gathered, and when the Prince asked what was the matter, they told him that two men were just going to be hanged.

Then the Prince looked at the two men and found they were his brothers, the very same who had stayed behind in the gay little inn living idle, wicked lives until now they were to be put to death.

'Let me pay money for their crimes, and save their lives!' cried the Prince, who had a kind heart.



So the people agreed to take the money and let the men go free. And when this was settled, they all rode on together towards home.

Now the day was very hot, and as they rode through a cool wood, the wicked brothers said, 'Let us rest by this well for a while, it is too hot to ride further.'

The Prince suspecting no harm, and never once thinking of the warning which the Fox had given him, dismounted and sat on the edge of the well to please his brothers. He had scarcely sat down when those wicked men gave him a sudden swift push, and over he fell backwards into the well. Then they seized the Horse and the Beautiful Maiden and the Golden Bird, and went on their way.

When they came to their father's palace, all the people came out to meet them and there were great rejoicings.

'We have not only brought back the Golden Bird, but also the Golden Horse and the Beautiful Maiden from the Golden Palace,' they said to the King, their father.

Then the King was very proud and happy, and the people shouted aloud with joy.

But the Horse would not eat, and the Bird would not sing, and the Princess sat weeping all the day long.

Now the youngest son was not killed when he fell into the well, for it was lined with soft moss, and there was no water in it.

But though he was not hurt, yet the well was so deep that he could not climb out, and he sat sadly at the bottom wondering what was to become of him, and moaning for his lost Princess. But suddenly something came leaping down from above, and a soft warm nose was thrust into his hand. It was his old friend the faithful Fox.

‘So you have got into trouble again,’ he said. ‘When will you learn to do as I tell you? However, I can’t bear to leave you here, so I must help you again, I suppose. Catch hold of my tail.’

The Prince caught hold of the tail and held on tightly, and the Fox climbed up dragging the Prince after him, and soon they were both standing safe and sound on the grass by the side of the well.

‘You must be careful what you do now,’ said

the Fox, 'for your brothers will be watching to see if you come home.

So the Prince looked about to see what disguise he could find, and presently he met a poor old beggar with whom he changed clothes, and then he went on to his father's palace.

But no sooner had he entered the courtyard than the Horse began to eat, and the Bird began to sing, and the Beautiful Princess dried her tears and began to dance with joy.

'What is the meaning of this?' asked the old King.

Then the Princess told him the whole story, and when it was finished she said, 'Now I feel sure that my own Prince has arrived, for there is laughter in my heart instead of tears.'

So the King ordered that every one in the palace should pass before him, and when the Prince came dressed like an old beggar, the Princess knew him at once, and ran and threw her arms round his neck.

Then the King was very angry with the two wicked Princes, and they were banished for ever from the Court. But the youngest son

was received with great rejoicing, and before very long he married the Beautiful Princess.

In the midst of all his happiness the Prince did not forget his faithful friend the Fox, and often looked for him in the wood. At last one day he found him sitting sadly in a hollow, with drooping tail and uncombed, matted coat.

'Ah! you are happy now,' said the Fox, 'but I am tired of my life. Will you not now grant me the one favour I ask? I pray you be so kind as to shoot me, and then cut off my head and my paws.'

He looked so miserable that the Prince thought it was kinder to do as he asked. But the moment the Prince had cut off the Fox's head and paws, what was his surprise to see a handsome young Prince step out of the Fox's skin!

And who should he be but the brother of the Beautiful Princess! He had been chained by an evil spell which was broken at last.

They were all now as happy as happy could be. The Princess seemed to grow more beautiful every day; the Golden Horse galloped

faster than the wind, and the Golden Bird sang so exquisitely as it sat on the golden apple-tree, that even the breezes lingered to listen, and the sunbeams danced to the music of its song.

THE INDUSTRIOUS GOBLINS

In the long-ago days, when fairies danced in the moonlight and goblins worked in the mountains, there lived a poor shoemaker and his wife in a little village at the Back of Beyond. The Shoemaker was a very honest, industrious man, and it was not his fault that he grew poorer and poorer every day, until at last he had only enough money left to buy leather for one pair of shoes. After that he did not know what would happen. He bought the leather and cut out the shoes that he might be ready to begin work early the next morning. Then he said his prayers and went to bed.

The next day, as soon as it was light, the Shoemaker took down the shutters, and when the light streamed in, what was his surprise to see a pair of beautifully made shoes standing ready in the place where he had laid the leather

the night before. He rubbed his eyes and thought he must be dreaming. But no, there they were! He took them in his hand to see if they were well made, and found that every stitch and every nail was in its right place. In fact he had never before seen such a well-made pair of shoes. He put them in the shop window, and very soon a purchaser came in and was so pleased with them that he paid twice as much as the Shoemaker expected.

Here was luck! The Shoemaker went off and bought enough leather for two pairs of shoes, and cut them out that he might be ready to begin work early the next morning. But as soon as the sun was up and he went to his work-bench, there stood two pairs of finished shoes, just as beautifully made as the first pair. These were sold at once, for no one had ever before had such comfortable shoes, and now the Shoemaker could buy enough leather to make four more pairs. Again the four pairs stood ready in the morning, and this went on until the Shoemaker was rich and prosperous and the fame of his wonderful shoes spread far and wide. And all he had to do was to cut out the

leather at night, and every morning there were dozens of beautifully finished shoes standing in a neat row.

It was drawing near to Christmas time and the ground was white with snow, when one night the Shoemaker said to his wife, 'Let us sit up and see if we can find out who it is that helps us so kindly.'

'Indeed I think it is time we knew, so that we may thank them,' answered his wife.

So they lighted a candle and hid themselves behind a great chest which stood in a corner of the workshop. And the moment the clock struck twelve, the door flew open and in there danced two little goblins. They were not at all ugly, as goblins usually are, but looked just as sweet and funny as a baby does when it kicks about in its bath. They had no clothes on to keep out the cold, and were obliged to hop about, first on one leg and then on the other, to warm themselves. Then they jumped on the Shoemaker's bench, crossed their little legs, and threaded their needles busily and began to sew. Stitch, stitch, hammer, hammer. Their little hands seemed to fly as they worked, and

everything was done so deftly and swiftly that the Shoemaker felt quite giddy as he watched them. And long before it was light the work was finished, and the elves placed all the shoes in a neat row and skipped down and disappeared out of the door.

‘Well, I never!’ cried the Shoemaker. ‘To think that these wee good folk should come and help a poor man in his trouble. I only wish I could do something to show how grateful I am.’

‘I will tell you what we can do,’ answered his wife. ‘The poor little dears have no clothes, and they must feel very cold in this bitter weather. I will make them little warm coats and everything else they can need, and knit them each a pair of woollen stockings, while you can make them the neatest, tiniest shoes that ever were seen.’

So the good wife bought scarlet cloth and soft warm wool and stitched and knitted till the little garments were quite ready. And the Shoemaker made the smallest and neatest little pairs of patent leather shoes that ever were seen, with rows of little white buttons.

And on Christmas Eve, instead of laying out the leather to be made into shoes, the Shoemaker and his wife placed a row of little garments on the bench, and then hid themselves behind the chest to see what would happen. The moment the clock struck twelve, the little goblins came dancing in and skipped as usual on to the bench. But when they saw the neat little scarlet coats and all the other things spread out in a row, they shouted with glee and began to dress themselves as quickly as they could. At last they came to the shoes and stockings, which made them scream with delight. They danced together over the chairs and tables and hugged each other with joy as they sang,

‘Smart little gentlemen now are we,
Dressed in the gayest of suits you see,
Never again will we shoemakers be.’

And creaking their shoes and cocking their little caps they danced out into the moonlight.

They never came back again to sew any more shoes, for the Shoemaker was now rich and no longer needed their help. But every Christmas

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Eve when the clock struck twelve they came down from the mountains, and always found new suits of smart little clothes, and shoes and stockings laid out ready for them on the Shoemaker's bench.

HANSEL AND GRETHEL

Far away, on the borders of a dark forest, there once lived a woodcutter with his wife and two children. The woodcutter was very poor indeed, and the children, who were called Hansel and Grethel, had often not enough bread to eat. Their mother had died when they were very little, and the woodcutter's new wife did not care for children, so times were hard for Hansel and Grethel.

As winter came on they grew poorer and poorer, until at last one night the poor woodcutter said to his wife, 'What are we to do? There is only one loaf left, and I fear we shall starve.'

'We must get rid of the children,' answered his wife. 'To-morrow we will take them into the wood and leave them there, and they will never be able to find their way home.'

'Oh no!' said the father, 'I could not leave them there to starve.'

'Well, we shall all starve together if they stay with us,' answered his wife, 'so it would come to the same thing in the end.'

And she talked to her husband until she made him promise to do as she had said.

Now, although it was late, Hansel and Grethel were wide awake, for they were too hungry to sleep, and they could not help hearing all the plans that were made.

'Oh!' sobbed Grethel, 'we shall be lost in the dark wood, and the wild beasts will eat us up.'

'Do not cry, little sister,' said Hansel. 'I will take care of you.' And he slipped out of bed and put on his little coat.

Then he softly unbarred the door and stepped out into the garden path. The moon was shining brightly, and the white pebbles on the path shone like new sixpences. So Hansel stooped down and filled his pockets as full as they would hold. Then he went in and crept back into bed again.

The next morning the wife came and woke

the children very early and told them they must get up and dress themselves quickly.

‘You shall go with us to the forest to-day, while your father cuts wood,’ she said.

Then she gave them each a thick slice of bread for their dinner, and they all set out together, Grethel carrying both slices of bread in her apron, for Hansel’s pockets were full of pebbles.

Now, as they went along, the father noticed that Hansel stopped and looked back every few minutes.

‘Why do you look back so often, my son?’ he asked. ‘If you do not take care you will stumble and fall.’

‘I only looked back to see my little white cat who is sitting on the roof,’ answered Hansel, ‘she wants to say good-bye to me.’

‘Nonsense!’ cried the woodcutter’s wife. ‘There is no cat; it is only the morning sun shining on the wet roof.’

But Hansel was not really looking at the cat, for each time he had turned round he dropped a white pebble on the road to mark the way which they were taking.

As they went further and further into the wood, the road grew more and more difficult, until at last the woodcutter stopped and told the children to gather some sticks and make them into a heap.

‘I am going to light a fire to warm you,’ he said, ‘and then you can rest here until I return.’

So Hansel and Grethel sat and warmed themselves at the fire and ate their slices of bread quite happily, for they thought they heard their father chopping wood close by. But the sound they heard was only the dead branch of a tree swinging in the wind. Then, feeling very tired after their long walk, they curled themselves up on the dry leaves and went fast asleep.

When they awoke it was quite dark and the fire was out, and the only sound they heard was the hooting of the owls overhead.

‘O Hansel, what shall we do?’ sobbed Grethel. ‘We are lost in the wood, and we shall never be able to find our way home.’

‘Only wait till the moon rises, little sister,’ said Hansel. ‘Give me your hand and I will take you safely home.’

And when the Lady Moon began to rise and send her silver moonbeams to lighten up the dark forest, the children set out, hand in hand, and found the white pebbles shining like little silver lamps all the way to the cottage.

‘You bad children!’ cried the woodcutter’s wife, when she opened the door to let them in. ‘We thought you were never coming home. You ought both to be whipped for staying out so long in the wood.’

But their father took them up in his arms and kissed them over and over again in his joy, for he had been afraid that he would never see them any more.

Not long after this there came a day when there was only one loaf left in the little hut, and the wife said to her husband, ‘We are even poorer than we were before. Must we all starve together, or shall we take the children once more to the forest, where they cannot possibly find their way home?’

The woodcutter was very unhappy at the thought, but because he had once said ‘Yes,’ it was now twice as difficult to say ‘No.’

The children lay trembling in their beds as

they listened to these plans, and poor little Grethel was terribly frightened. But Hansel comforted her again and slipped out of bed to fill his pockets with the white pebbles. This time, however, the door was locked and barred, so Hansel could not get out, and he had to creep back to bed again and think of some other plan.

‘Come, get up, you lazy children!’ cried the wife next morning. ‘You are going to the forest with us to-day. Here is your dinner.’

And she gave them two small slices of bread.

Grethel put her slice into her pocket, but Hansel crumbled his into small pieces, and these he dropped along the way as he had done with the pebbles.

‘What are you turning round to look at?’ asked the woman. ‘Be quick and do not linger.’

‘I was only saying good-bye to my white pigeon who is sitting on the roof,’ said Hansel.

‘Nonsense!’ cried the woman, ‘there is no pigeon. It is only the morning sun shining on the wet roof.’

But she did not see that every time Hansel stopped to look back he dropped a crumb to mark the way.

This time they went much further into the heart of the wood, and when the children were tired, their father told them to gather wood and he would make them a fire.

'You can rest here until we come back,' he said.

So they rested by the fire, and Grethel shared her slice of bread with Hansel, and then they grew so tired of waiting for their father that they went fast asleep.

It was quite dark when they woke, and Grethel wept, for she was sure there were wild beasts prowling about ready to eat them up. But Hansel was quite brave.

'I will take care of you, little sister,' he said. 'And I can easily find my way home, for I marked the road with my bread crumbs.'

But alas! the birds had eaten up every crumb, and there was not one left to show them the way home. Still they wandered on and on, all that night and all next day, but they only seemed to get deeper and deeper into the

forest. They had nothing to eat but a few berries which they found in the wood, and when the third day dawned they were nearly starving.

‘O Hansel!’ said Grethel, ‘I think we shall be obliged to eat the fairy-toadstools.’

But Hansel held her hand tight and led her on, and suddenly they saw a beautiful white bird sitting on the branch of a tree overhead. It sang so sweetly that the children stopped to listen to it, and when it spread its great white fluttering wings and flew off, they ran after it as quickly as they could. It seemed to know that the children were following, for it circled slowly in front of them until it stopped over a tiny cottage in the heart of the wood.

And when the children came near they found it was the most wonderful cottage they had ever seen. It was built entirely of gingerbread, ornamented with tarts; the windows were made of transparent barley-sugar, and the steps of almond rock.

‘What a feast we shall have!’ cried Hansel, standing on tip-toe to break off a piece of the overhanging gingerbread-roof. ‘Help your-

self to a pane of barley-sugar, little sister, or a step of almond rock.'

Grethel took a piece of gingerbread in one hand and a pane of barley-sugar in the other, and sat down on the almond-rock steps to enjoy herself. And as they were both eating as fast as they could, they heard a gentle voice from the inside of the cottage saying,

'Munching and crunching! Do I hear a
mouse

Eating the walls of my gingerbread
house?'

But the children answered quickly,

'Tis only the wind you mistake for a
mouse,

And no one is eating your gingerbread
house.'

Then, as the children went on eating, the cottage door opened and an old, old woman hobbled out.

Hansel dropped his square of gingerbread, and Grethel paused with a mouthful of barley-



sugar. They were both so frightened they could not move.

'Dear little children,' said the old woman, 'do not be afraid of me. You are welcome to eat as much of my house as you like. But come inside and I will give you a nice dinner.'

Then she led the children in and fed them on pancakes and apple-tarts and cream, and afterwards she tucked them into two little white beds, and the children felt as if they were in heaven.

But though the old woman seemed so kind and good, she was really a very wicked old witch, who loved to catch fat little children and kill and eat them. She had red eyes, which never see very far, but she could smell things as quickly as a fox, and knew when Hansel and Grethel were wandering in the forest. So she had built the gingerbread house on purpose to catch them.

Early next morning the old witch went in to look at the sleeping children, and she rubbed her withered old hands with glee when she saw how tender and fresh they looked. She

would have liked them to be plumper, but that was easily mended. So she seized Hansel with her bony hand, and before he was half awake she thrust him into a little iron cage and fastened the grating in front. Then she shook Grethel roughly by the shoulder.

‘Get up, you lazy little girl!’ she cried. ‘You must light the fire and fill the big pot with water and help me to make the breakfast. For I have shut your brother up in a cage, and I am going to fatten him until he is plump enough to cook for my supper.’

So poor little Grethel was obliged to do as the old witch bade her, and while Hansel was fed on the choicest dainties, she had only shell-fish and crabs’-claws to eat. And every day the old witch would go to the little iron cage and say to Hansel, ‘Little boy, put out your finger that I may see how fat you are growing.’

But Hansel knew that she could not see with her red eyes, and so he poked out a bone instead of his finger. And every day when she felt it, she grumbled fearfully because he never seemed to grow fatter.

At last she could wait no longer and she said to Grethel, 'You must get up very early to-morrow morning, for there is plenty of work for you to do. I am going to cook your brother for dinner, and you must light the fire and heat the oven and help me prepare for the feast.'

Poor Grethel cried as if her heart would break.

'Oh, how I wish we had starved together in the wood, or been eaten up by the wild beasts!' she sobbed. 'Anything would have been better than this.'

'Wishing will not do you much good,' said the wicked old witch, blinking her red eyes with glee. 'And stop those foolish tears or you will put the fire out.'

Grethel went about with a very heavy heart next day, as she lit the fire, and filled the big pot with water, and heated the great stone oven. And when it was all ready the old witch called to her and said, 'I have kneaded the dough, and the loaves are ready for baking. Come, little girl, creep into the oven and tell me if it is hot enough.'

Now the old witch meant to shut the oven door as soon as the child was inside, and bake her for dinner instead of the bread, but Grethel guessed what she meant to do.

'The door is too small, and I don't know how to get in,' she said.

'What nonsense!' answered the witch; 'see, it is quite big enough, and you put your head in first, like this.'

And the old witch stooped down and poked her head inside the oven.

Quick as thought Grethel ran behind and with all her might gave her a sudden push, so that the old witch went headlong into the oven, and Grethel banged the door shut and fastened it securely.

Then she found the key of Hansel's cage and ran quickly to let him out.

'The old witch is safe in the oven,' she cried, and they threw their arms round each other and danced for joy.

After that they went into the cottage and opened all the witch's treasure chests, and Hansel filled his pockets with pearls and diamonds and rubies, while Grethel took as

many jewels as her little apron would hold.

Then, hand in hand, they set out once more to try to find their way home, and very glad they were to leave the witch's cottage behind. They had not gone far through the wood when they came to a great lake, so broad that it would be impossible to cross it without a boat.

'What shall we do?' said Hansel. 'There is no bridge, and I can see no boat to carry us over.'

'Look,' said Grethel, 'I see a white duck swimming out there; perhaps she will help us.

And she began to sing,

'Little duck, little duck, help us, we pray,
We are two little children who've quite
lost their way,
I know you are kind by your gentle quack,
quack,
Will you carry us over upon your white
back?'

Then the duck came swimming to her at once, quite ready to carry them across. Hansel

climbed on to her back first, and wanted Grethel to sit on his knee, but she was afraid they would be too heavy for the kind duck, so she waited until Hansel had crossed to the other side and the duck returned to carry her over too.

And when they stood together on the opposite shore of the lake, they found to their joy that it was a part of the wood which they knew quite well. They ran along quickly, and at the next turning they came in sight of their own little hut, and saw their father standing at the door.

The poor woodcutter was overjoyed when the children rushed into his arms. He had never known a moment's happiness since he had left the children in the wood, and now he was all alone, for his wife had died. He held the children in his arms and cried for joy, and they told him all their adventures and how they had escaped from the wicked witch.

'And see what we have brought home!' said Grethel, opening her apron and showing the glittering jewels.

'And look how full my pockets are!' said

Hansel, turning them out until the floor was covered with precious stones.

So now they had riches enough to last them all their days, and they would never be hungry again. But though the diamonds and rubies were very precious, Hansel and Grethel thought they were not half as beautiful as the little white pebbles on the garden walk, which shone like new sixpences when the moon came out and bathed them in her silver light.

SNOW-WHITE AND ROSE-RED

Once upon a time there lived a poor widow in a little cottage near a wood. The cottage stood in the middle of a garden, which in summer-time was gay with every kind of flower. But most beautiful of all the flowers were the roses which grew at each side of the door—one as white as snow, and the other an exquisite rose-red.

Now this poor widow had two little girls, one so like the white roses that her mother called her Snow-white, and the other so like the red that she was called Rose-red. Both the little girls were as good as gold, and so fond of each other that when they went out together they always walked hand in hand, and when Snow-white would say, 'We will never part from one another,' Rose-red would always answer, 'No, never!'

Both Snow-white and Rose-red were very fond of wandering about the wood which was close to the cottage, and they soon learned to know all the birds and beasts that lived there. And because the little sisters were so gentle and kind, the wild creatures soon grew quite tame and would come to eat out of their hands and play with them. If night came on and they were far from home the children would make a mossy nest for themselves and sleep there till morning. No harm ever came near them; indeed one night when, tired out with play, they had fallen asleep under a coverlid of dry warm leaves, they woke at sunrise to find a beautiful child bending over them. He smiled as they woke and then quickly disappeared among the green trees, but when the children looked round, they found they had been sleeping on the edge of a precipice. And when they told their mother about the beautiful child with the shining wings, she said, 'That was your guardian angel watching over you to keep you from harm.'

For each little child has a guardian angel, although he cannot always be seen.

In summer-time it was Rose-red's duty to keep the cottage neat and tidy, and every day before breakfast she used to gather two posies to put beside her mother's plate. In one was always a snow-white rose, and in the other a lovely rose-coloured one.

In winter-time Snow-white took her turn, and she polished up all the brass pots till they shone like gold, which made the cottage look quite gay and bright although now there were no flowers for the breakfast-table.

One winter night, when the snow was falling and the wind howled through the bare branches of the forest trees, Snow-white and Rose-red sat busily spinning by the fire while their mother read to them out of a big book. A lamb cuddled close up against one little girl and a white dove perched on the shoulder of the other, and it was all so warm and comfortable that no one minded the storm outside. But presently there came a loud knock at the door, and the mother stopped her reading and bade Snow-white go to see who was there. 'It may be some poor traveller,' she said, 'seeking shelter from the storm.'

Snow-white jumped up quickly and ran to do

as she was bid, but what was her surprise, when she opened the door, to find a great black bear standing just outside in the snow. Before she had time to cry out the bear thrust his head in, and said in a deep growling voice, 'May I come in and warm myself?'

Snow-white ran away and hid in the kitchen, Rose-red crept under the bed, the lamb began to bleat with fear, and the dove flew round and round in great terror.

'Don't be frightened,' growled the bear again, 'I won't harm you. I only want to warm myself, for I am half frozen.'

'Come in, Mr. Bear,' cried the good mother, 'you are most welcome to lie by the fire and warm yourself.'

Then she called Snow-white and Rose-red and told them to get the stiff broom and brush out the bear's fur, and to find him something to eat. Very soon he lay warm and comfortable before the fire, with his coat nicely brushed. And he grew so friendly that the little girls began to play with him, and pull his ears, while the lamb crept out and lay quite close to him, and the dove perched on his back.

Every evening when it began to grow dusk the black bear came back to the cottage, and he soon became such a favourite that no one thought of shutting the door until he had arrived and was stretched out before the bright fire.

But by and by the winter snow melted away, and spring began to peep out and show her face in the snowdrops and celandine, and her breath warmed the earth till the green buds began to swell in the wood. Then one night the black bear said sadly to Snow-white, 'To-morrow I must leave you and go far away, and I shall not return for many months. As long as winter locks the frozen earth my treasure is safe from those mischievous little imps, the dwarfs, but as soon as spring sets everything free nothing is safe from their thievish little hands.'

Snow-white and Rose-red were very sorry to part with their dear black bear, and they cried as they opened the door to let him go. And as he went he tore a tiny piece of his skin on the latch, and Snow-white was sure that something shone like gold underneath. But the black

bear trotted quickly off and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

Now that spring was come, the little girls spent a great deal of their time in the forest, and one day when they were there gathering sticks they saw what looked like a large red-and-white grasshopper skipping round a big fir-tree. They went at once to see what it could be, and found it was a little old man dressed in scarlet with the longest white beard that ever was seen. He was dancing round in a furious rage, for his beard was caught in a cleft of a tree, and tug as he might he could not pull it out.

'You poor little man, however did you manage to be caught like that?' asked Snow-white quite politely.

'How did I manage it?' screamed the manikin, 'you rude, inquisitive child! Why, I wanted to cut chips out of this tree to make firewood (I only need chips and small logs to cook my dainty dishes, for I don't eat great big dinners like you greedy mortals who need coal fires). Well, I had just got my wedge in, when the nasty thing slipped, and before I could jump aside the cleft had closed and

caught in my beautiful, beautiful white beard.'

'We are very sorry for you,' said Rose-red ; 'perhaps you would like us to go and fetch some one to help you?'

'Fetch some one indeed !' shouted the dwarf, dancing about more furiously than ever, 'two of you are quite enough, you nasty grinning little cats !'

But Snow-white took no notice of his rude speech and began to look in her pocket for a pair of scissors. Then she told the little man that if he would only try to stand still and have a little patience she would do her best.

So, very carefully, she cut the soft white beard close to the cleft, and in a few minutes the little man was free.

'Nice sort of bunglers you are !' grumbled he as he hopped off, carrying a bagful of gold which had lain hidden among the roots of the tree ; 'you have entirely spoilt my beautiful beard, and ought to be ashamed of yourselves.' And that was the only 'thank you' he said ; but Snow-white and Rose-red only laughed as they ran home together.

SNOW-WHITE AND ROSE-RED III

Not long afterwards, when the children were fishing in a stream that ran through the wood, they again saw something red and white dangling from the bank overhanging a deep pool, and when they came nearer they found it was their friend the dwarf. There he was hanging over the edge of the steep bank, grasping with both hands the reeds and grass to save himself from tumbling into the dark pool below. His white beard floated out over the stream, and his little red legs were curled up in terror beneath him, for a great big fish was swishing its tail just below. Above his head on the bank were two water-pots, in which the dwarf evidently kept his bait, and at the very moment when Snow-white and Rose-red came round the corner, one of the pots slid forward, dragged down by the grass, and emptied all the water plump on the old man's bald head.

‘Why do you hang there as if you meant to throw yourself into the water?’ asked Rose-red.

‘Throw myself into the water!’ screamed the shrill little voice. ‘Have you no eyes, or are you quite silly? Can’t you see that my beard is

caught in my fishing-line, and that great big fish is pulling me into the water?’

Then the children saw that, sure enough, the white beard was entangled in the line, and the fish being stronger than the manikin, was dragging him down and down.

So they went at once and tried to haul him up again, and as soon as they could reach his beard Snow-white brought out her scissors and this time cut off nearly half a yard before she could set him free.

‘You little monsters!’ he cried as soon as he could stand upright, ‘how dare you go about cutting off people’s beards? You have spoilt my beauty for ever. May your shoes wear out and your toes be covered with chilblains!’

And he hopped off grumbling all the time, but taking care to carry away his water-pots with him.

Snow-white and Rose-red thought they had seen the last of him this time, but a few days after they met him again. This time their mother had sent them to the town to buy needles and cotton and ribbons, and as they were crossing the heath they saw a great



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eagle swooping down before them. It pounced on a little red figure who was trying to hide behind a rock, and when the children heard shrill screams they recognised the voice of the little dwarf. Forgetting his rudeness and ingratitude, they ran as fast as they could and caught hold of his legs just as the bird was carrying him off. They tugged and they pulled and hung on to his coat, until at last the eagle was obliged to let go and the little man was set free.

But instead of being thankful he only danced with rage and screamed out, 'You rough, clumsy creatures! See how you have torn my red coat and dragged my stockings!'

Then he seized a bag of precious stones which lay hidden behind the rock and disappeared into a little cave.

Snow-white and Rose-red were quite accustomed to his manners by this time, and they took no notice, but went on gaily hand in hand towards the town to buy their needles and cotton and ribbons.

As they were returning quite late, and it was getting dark, whom should they stumble over

by the same rock, but the little dwarf sitting with his lap full of precious stones counting them in the twilight! He thought no one would be passing so late, and he was in a great rage when he looked up and saw Snow-white and Rose-red standing there with round eyes full of surprise and admiration gazing at the beautiful sparkling jewels which shone like a fire of rainbow-coloured flame in his lap.

‘What are you come spying here for, you miserable little crows?’ he shouted, and his small grey face grew almost as red as his coat with anger.

But just as he was going to fly at them, a fearful growl was heard close by, and a big black bear came prowling out of the wood behind them.

The little red dwarf caught up his bag of jewels and turned to run away, but the great bear stood in front of the little cave in the rocks and would not allow him to pass.

‘O kind, good Mr. Bear,’ he said, ‘don’t eat me up! I am very old and tough, and I would not taste nice at all. Just take these two

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wicked little girls instead. They are as plump and tender as spring chickens, and you could even crunch their bones quite easily.'

But almost before he had finished speaking—whack!—the black bear lifted his great paw and knocked the dwarf flat on the ground. And he never got up again!

Then Snow-white and Rose-red turned to run away, but the black bear called out, 'Snow-white, don't you know me?'

And then they knew it was their own dear black bear come home again. But as they ran to meet him, the great black furry coat slipped off and there stood a most charming young Prince, dressed in beautiful gold-embroidered clothes.

'I am a King's son,' he said, bowing low to Snow-white and Rose-red; 'that wicked dwarf stole all my treasures and then changed me into a bear. I was obliged to live in the woods all alone, and nothing could release me but the death of this bad old man. So now you see how well he deserved his punishment.'

Then Snow-white and Rose-red led the Prince home to the cottage, and before very long the Prince and Snow-white were married, while

Rose-red married the Prince's brother. And in the red dwarf's cave was found all the stolen treasure, and so much more besides that there was enough for both sisters.

Of course they had to leave the cottage and little garden and go to live in a beautiful palace, but the mother went too, and she took with her the two rose bushes which were planted on each side of her window. And when summer came there were no flowers in all the palace garden which she loved as much as those two roses—one as white as snow, and the other a beautiful rose-red.

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